DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 850 UD 016 907

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TITLE Urban Education: The New Challenge.
PUB DATE 6 Apr 77
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, N.Y., April 6, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; Compensatory Education Programs; Educational Accountability; Educational Assessment; *Educational Change; Educational Legislation; Educationally Disadvantaged; Educational Policy; *Educational Problems; *Equal Education; Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Federal Legislation; *Federal Programs; *Historical Reviews; Minority Group Children; *Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS *Elementary Secondary Education Act Title I; ESEA Title I

ABSTRACT

The decade of the 1960's was marked with events designed to create appropriate conditions for equal educational and occupational opportunities. There was a commitment in the 1960's to look at the urban crisis in terms of its educational, sociological, psychological, health, welfare, and housing dimensions, and researchers launched a variety of studies to describe disadvantaged populations in urban areas in these various contexts. Because the issue of full and equal employment opportunities was seen to be directly tied to educational attainment, the 1960's marked the beginning of educational legislation, judicial decisions, and studies designed to correct the educational gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged populations. The Vocational Education Act of 1963, The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 are a few examples of federal legislation to aid in the education of disadvantaged populations. Although the move to create equal educational opportunity began in the 1960's, the commitment of urban schools systems to that goal is seriously questioned today. There are still many areas of criticism surrounding the more common issues of curriculum design, teaching strategies, appropriate instructional materials, valid assessment procedures, and testing and evaluation issues, but also, newer areas are being inspected such as the quality of the teaching and administrative staffs, compulsory attendance laws, the schools' obligation to educate students, and multicultural and bilingual education. The new challenge to urban education and to urban educators is seen to consist of a reaffirmation of the belief that education is important and that urban populations have a right to equal educational opportunities. (Author/AM)

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URBAN EDUCATION: THE NEW CHALLENGE

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In 1962, at what turned out to be the first of ten annual Work Conferences on Urban Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, fifteen papers were directed toward the major theoretical and empirical considerations of the broad topic: "Education in Depressed Areas." The papers formed a concerted attempt to analyze the unique characteristics and roles of the school in the urban setting; the nature of existing and required instructional procedures; the characteristics of personnel and material resources; and the scope and dimensions of the problems faced in urban schools. In opening the first part of the report of that work conference-- a book titled "Education in Depressed Areas"-- I wrote:

> Figures alone-- massive as they are--scarecely hint at the impact of urbanization on all aspects of life in the cities. The 1960 census reports indicate that 61.3 per cent of the nation's population lives in the 189 standard metropolitan areas. From 1950 to 1960, more than 80 per cent of the total population increment took place in these areas. For education, the more dramatic fact is that almost one of every six elementary and secondary school children now attends a public school in one of the sixteen largest American cities. Statistics do not depict the physical and economic deterioration of the central city gray areas, the movement of the middle class to the suburbs, the transiency and instability of the in-migrant families, the concentration and intensification of social problems in depressed

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Invited address for Organizational meeting of AERA Special Interest Group/ Urban Education at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York, New York, April 6, 1977.

areas. City slums have existed for generations, even though their tenants have changed with each migration. Ethnic, racial, and socio-economic groups have coalesced in areas of the city, creating de facto segregation in the schools even where laws imply non-segregation. School buildings in the depressed urban areas seem to house the greatest array of educational problems. (Passow, 1963, p.1)

At this time, the civil rights movement and what was later to become "the war on poverty" were just beginning to gather real momentum and the post-Sputnik concern for trained manpower had highlighted the inadequate development of talent among minority groups. Earlier, in 1957, the superintendents and board of education members of the fourteen largest city school systems met in Atlantic City to share their concerns about the problems of education in large urban areas. From this meeting grew the Ford Foundation's Great Cities School Improvement Project which initially tackled such problems as current and prospective youth employment opportunities, limited fiscal resources of the large cities, and educating an increasing number of children with limited backgrounds. The Great Cities teams developed what they called the "Central Hypothesis"--the hypothesis that the problems of children with limited backgrounds could be effectively and economically solved by:

1. Development of a program of education adapted to the needs of these children.
2. Modification in the organizational patterns within the school.
3. Proper selection and utilization of personnel.
4. Improved utilization of instructional equipment and materials.
5. Involvement of parents and of the community in the educational program.

The "Central Hypothesis" of the Great Cities project assumed that we knew what the needs of these children were, how personnel could

could be selected and deployed properly, that good instructional materials existed to be used, etc.. In the early 1960's, a Research Council of the Great Cities Program for School Improvement was formed. Its first study dealt with the pre- and in-service education of teachers, aimed at finding and recommending more effective ways to prepare teachers for the demanding work of teaching, not only children with limited backgrounds but all children in urban schools.

In 1962, Mobilization for Youth was funded from a combination of sources, including the Ford Foundation. This first large-scale program, located in New York's Lower East Side, was ostensibly aimed at the control and alleviation of juvenile delinquency. In this pre-war on poverty era, it was juvenile delinquency which provided access to program funding. MFY's approach was a comprehensive one involving projects in the so-called worlds of legal services, neighborhood and community services, work, mental health, and education. Education, incidentally, was not included in the original "worlds" of MFY but was only added after the funding agencies insisted that it should be.

Even in that era, the complexity of the problem seemed to be understood. The importance of looking at the problems in terms of their educational, sociological, psychological, economic, political, health, welfare and housing dimensions was increasingly clear. At the work conference, I raised the question of whether the school alone can make the necessary impact without society's opening up really equal opportunities in employment, in housing, in civic affairs. The importance of full and equal employment opportunities could not be overemphasized and was directly tied to educational attainment. I suggested that we needed to know much more about the nature, the consequences, the effects of the total societal milieu on educational

opportunity. We needed to know how each of the subfactors interacts with others to create the conditions for equal opportunity. I suggested that we needed to understand and capitalize on the positive elements of the life-styles of urban dwellers, of various ethnic and racial minority groups, of the city as an educational resource. I concluded the 1962 conference as follows:

> The outlook is both discouraging and hopeful. It is discouraging in terms of its size, complexity, bitterness, and the human cost involved. The outlook is hopeful in the forces which are being mobilized to dissect and resolve this wasteful, destructive problems of displaced citizens in a rejecting or ignoring homeland. The ideal is clear, the directions well marked; now, the initial steps must be taken so that all Americans can move ahead toward the fullest realization of each individual's potential. (Passow, 1963, p. 351)

Seven or so years later, nine of the specialists who had participlated in the first work conference participated in a year-long lecture series in which each was asked not simply to update his earlier paper, but rather to attempt to reconceptualize the field in the decade ahead. In Urban Education in the 1970's, I observed:

> Since then [1962], having spent billions of dollars on compensatory education, initiated thousands of projects (each with its own clever acronym title), completed hundreds of studies of uneven significance and even more disparate quality, entered numerous judicial decisions and rulings, experienced dozens of riots and disorders, and generated whole new agencies and educational institutions, the nation's urban schools continue to operate in a vortex of segregation, alienation, and declining achievement. (Passow, 1971, p.1)

Despite a considerable amount of rhetoric and numerous studies and reports, what has been called the "urban crisis" grows more intense in all its dimensions. While the concentration of the poor and the non-white population continues in central cities, Downs has pointed out that

"not one significant program of any federal, state, or local government is aimed at altering this tendency or is it likely to have the unintended effect of doing so." Data from the 1970 national census confirm that the greatest population growth has been in suburbia, with the segregation of the poor and minority groups becoming even more intense in central cities. Black and other nonwhite migration to suburbia did appear to be increasing at a rate which exceeded earlier projections. Such migration tended to be middle-class, leaving the poor behind and enhancing socioeconomic segregation.

We are all familiar with events in the decade of the 1960's--the legislation, the judicial decisions, the studies. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 was designed to strengthen and extend all aspects of vocational and technical education, with specific attention to certain disadvantaged groups. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided subsidies to school personnel for evolving and implementing plans for desegregation and finding ways to cope with emergent problems. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 promoted a Job Corps, work-study programs, urban and rural community action programs and adult basic education. In addition, that act made funds available for remedial programs, preschool and day care centers, tutoring, materials production and teacher education. The 1965 revision of the National Defense Education Act provided for strengthening instruction, extending guidance, using newer media more effectively, developing vocational education, and training teachers for working with the educationally disadvantaged. Parts of the Higher Education Act of 1965 dealt with teacher education for classroom and supervisory personnel in disadvantaged area schools.

Of course, the most important piece of federal legislation insofar as the schools were concerned, was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Title I of ESEA declared it to be "the policy of the United

to provide financial assistance ...to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families..." and billions of dollars per year have been appropriated since then with very mixed results in terms of the original intent of ESEA (1965) expressed in its formal title: "an Act to strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities in the Nation's elementary and secondary schools." While not aimed solely at inner-city and urban school systems, clearly a large portion of the target population was located in such settings. The House Committee on Education and Labor report which accompanied the ESEA legislation asserted that "aid to the economically disadvantaged child represents the basic approach to widespread educational improvement in this country." (Emphasis added) Head Start programs (first summer only and then year-round) were launched at the same time, to be followed later by Follow-Through programs. Thus, compensatory education was conceived and developed in the 1960s aimed not only aiding the disadvantaged but at improving the quality of education and of educational opportunities more broadly.

Researchers launched a variety of studies-- empirical, analytical, theoretical, philosophical, and historical-- describing the disadvantaged populations in a variety of contexts--family, school, culture, etc.. There was an outpouring of research that developed or refined or reformulated the significance of early childhood on cognitive and affective development, for example. There were developments and reconceptualizations of our insights into linguistic growth of individuals which had implications for child-rearing and schooling practice. There were researchers that, as Warren Button put it, developed or invented concepts which sliced the universe in new ways so as to make possible the description of regular relation-

ships in the behaviors of pupils, teachers, and administrators in city schools. How useful this research was in guiding the design of educational programs and practices; how well it was disseminated, understood, and applied; to what extent research provided the theoretical base for planning program strategies-- are all questionable. For instance, Janowitz examined four different models for transforming the institutional structure of inner-city schools, each of which had different implications for such aspects as "classroom management; the use of the new media; teacher education and career lines; authority and decentralization; pupil composition; school-community relations." (Janowitz, 1969, p. 60) There is very little evidence that the many thousands of programs funded by Title I and other federally or state funded programs for urban schools had much of a research or theoretical base.

In 1966, in fulfillment of the requirement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the so-called Coleman Report (Equality of Educational Opportunity) was published and provided educators, behavioral and social scientists, politicians, and the general public with considerable grist for each of their mills. Not surprisingly, the study found that segregation and racial isolation were widespread. Hard on the heels of the Coleman Report came the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights report, Racial Isolation in the Public Schools (1967) which concluded that "Compensatory educational programs have been of limited effectiveness because they have attempted to solve problems that stem, in large part, from racial and social isolation in schools, which themselves are isolated by racial and social class." (p.205) The two reports opened up a continuing debate on the issues of racial and, to a lesser extent, socioeconomic segregation. Perhaps the most provocative paragraph in the Coleman Report-- page 325-- which concluded:

> That schools bring little influence to bear upon a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context; and that this very lack of independent effect means that the inequalities imposed upon children by their home, neighborhood, and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. For equality of educational opportunity through schools must imply a strong effect of schools that is independent of the child's social environment, and that strong independent effect is not present in American schools.

A number of studies, many involving reanalysis of the Coleman survey data, examined this issue, including the Jencks et al. publication on Inequality. Guthrie observed concerning this controvery:

> the belief has become increasingly pervasive that patterns of academic performance are immutably molded by social and economic conditions outside the school. If incorrect, and if allowed to persist unexamined and unchallenged, this belief could have wildly disabling consequencess. It is not at all difficult to foresee how it could become self-fulfilling; administrators and teachers believing that their school and schoolroom actions make no difference might begin to behave accordingly. Conversely, if the assertion is correct but allowed to pass unheeded, the prospect of pouring even more billions of local, State, and Federal dollars down an ineffective rathole labeled "schools" is equally unsettling. (Guthrie, 1970, p. 25)

More recently, Coleman has added new fuel to the controvery concerning desegregation by completely reversing his position as a strong advocate of school desegregation and busing. On the basis of more recent research, Coleman concluded that court-ordered busing for the purpose of school desegregation had contributed to the flight of the middle class from American cities and that federal courts, by ordering desegregation in opposition to the will of the majority of whites, were contributing to racial tensions. Aside from the controversy concerning the specific issue of

desegregation, the recent Coleman study raises a very serious question as to what the role of social and behavioral scientists is in policy determination and in the judicial process. Increasingly in such areas as segregation, allocation of resources, student rights, teacher rights, curriculum and materials selection, bi-lingual education, and a variety of other topics, there has been an increasing involvement of the courts in the formulation of educational policy with social and behavioral scientists being called upon to provide expert testimony. The National Institute of Education recently published a report on an international symposium dealing with "Education, Social Science, and the Judicial Process" which raised a number of significant issues. Having served recently as a so-called "expert witness" in which the State of New York is being sued by New York, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse on the issue of its formulae for state aid, I was especially sensitive to questions raised by the NIE symposium:

-- What is the usefulness of /~~social science evidence~~/ to the court when the evidence in question is not agreed to by the scientific community as a whole?

-- What are the implications when social scientists testify, with equal conviction, to opposing conclusions about the same fact situation?

-- Should social scientists be involved in educational litigation at all and is the adversary process the proper forum for the airing of controversial and contradictory social science issues?

Increasingly, on a variety of educational issues, individuals and agencies are turning to the courts for resolution and for relief and social scientists will be called upon to participate in that process. While it is hardly likely that "definitive empirical research" will emerge immediately, the issues raised require thoughtful consideration by educational researchers and social scientists.

When the HEW Urban Education Task Force published its report, "Urban School Crisis: The Problems and Solutions," the so-called Riles

Committee pointed out that urban education systems were facing a major challenge to provide appropriate learning experiences for the various life styles of their vast numbers of students and that these problems were not of sudden origin. The report focused on documenting the needs of urban education-- both those of the majority and of the minority. The Task Force commented that pilot or demonstration projects have usually lacked the magnitude to provide adequate answers and

> While educational research has played a part in some of these projects, the general pattern has been to avoid the kind of research which deals with major learning problems. Researchers have usually singled out only limited aspects of such problems for largely financial or methodological reasons. First rate comprehensive studies of inner-city children and youth are rare phenomena indeed. Thus, research with its current conceptualization and methodology does not provide a clear sense of the broad directions to be taken.

The HEW Urban Education Task Force called for, among other things, expansion of the concept of the educative process to deal with the whole individual, "his health, his emotional well-being, his intellectual capacities, his future employment, his self-realization...." The report argued for the development and implementation of a master plan for urban education tailored to the specific needs of a particular urban area.

> Such a plan must concomitantly deal with causes and symptoms, must be conceived within a framework of over-all urban problem solving rather than education per se, and must encompass all educational levels, i.e., from early childhood through higher and adult education. Moreover this plan must reflect a considerable expansion and enrichment of what constitutes "education." Within the educational plan, there must be stress placed on developing and implementing appropriate curricular designs, consumer participation, staff development programs for <u>all</u> concerned, supportive services, and evaluation. Finally, it must be interrelated with other facets of the larger urban problems, such

as housing, employment, recreation, and health. (p. 6)

The Task Force recognized that the development and implementation of a master plan would not take place over night and that it would require "time, work, and the changing of attitudes," but if any urban school system has taken the proposal seriously, it has escaped notice. Yet, we know that simplistic and patchwork programs simply have not and will not work, but continue to function in this way.

The Education Amendments of 1974 (Public Law 93-380) includes Section 821 which instructs the National Institute of Education to study compensatory programs, including:

1. An examination of the fundamental purposes of such programs, and the effectiveness of such programs in attaining such purposes;
2. An analysis of means to identify accurately the children who have the greatest need for such programs, in keeping with the fundamental purposes thereof;
3. An analysis of the effectiveness of methods and procedures for meeting the educational needs of children, including the use of individualized written educational plans for children, and programs for training the teachers of children;
4. An exploration of alternative methods, including the use of procedures to assess educational disadvantage, for distributing funds....in an equitable and efficient manner, which will accurately reflect current conditions and insure that such funds reach the areas of greatest current needs and are effectively used for such areas; (pp. I-1-2)

The act makes possible NIE's funding not more than 20 experimental programs and requires a final report by September 1978. Congress requested the study because it was dissatisfied with prior evaluations of Title I and wanted information on which to base decisions about changes in legislation. Thus, NIE is mandated to assess the effectiveness of compensatory education programs in meeting their fundamental purposes and with examining alternative

methods by which the effectiveness of compensatory programs might be improved. The NIE research strategy consists of 35 research projects organized into four areas: allocation of funds, service delivery, student development, and administration. The NIE Compensatory Education Study should provide useful data to educational planners; its influence on future legislation affecting urban school systems will depend as much on the politics of education as on the data one suspects.

Since 1972, there have been as many as eight or ten studies--depending on how and what one counts--which set forth the shortcomings of the high schools of today, examine that nature and causes of the problems of educating and socializing youth, and propose policy and program changes which, if ever implemented, would affect all of the institutions and agencies serving youth as well as society generally. These reports of committees pressing to reform secondary education are especially critical of the urban high school which they perceive as "beleaguered institutions" about to collapse. The Kettering Report, for instance, observed:

> The American comprehensive high school today must be viewed as an establishment striving to meet the complex demands of society in the throes of social change, at a time when the school system has become too large an institution and is literally overrun with a mix of young people from inconsistent social backgrounds. This is a difficult circumstance. The pressure of these forces exhausts the strength of the high school as an organized institution. (Brown, 1973, p.10)

In the New York Times a few days ago, a New York City teacher, Marc Bloom, described his junior high school language arts and creative writing classes in terms of their age span, racial and ethnic backgrounds, academic achievement, conduct, family backgrounds, special talents, street knowledge, personal concerns, etc.. He concluded:

After Vietnam, the Beatles and Watergate, after teacher strikes and student rights, after poverty and anti-poverty, after J.F.K., R.F.K. and Martin Luther King, Jr., after Archie Bunker, the Fonz, after the Mets, the Nets, Jets, Sets, and the Super Bowl, after Ali, there is an intangible milieu of antagonism and despair that embodies today's youth.

I work in a good school with competent teachers, but it is all too much for us to handle. (Emphasis added)

Every urban school district, William Hazard observes, has its own set of horror stories-- escalating crime and severity of schoolhouse crime. He draws on a 1976 Philadelphia Inquirer story:

...in a one-year period (1974-1975 school year) American school children committed 100 murders, 12,000 armed robberies, 9,000 rapes, 204,000 aggravated assaults against teachers and each other, and vandalized more than $ 600 million worth of school property. It would be silly to suggest that crime in the schools is caused by our recent determination to apply state and federal constitutional protections to school children. It would not be silly, however, to look more carefully at the school as a social system with explicit and implict special needs and problems and to take more seriously the interdependence of the in-school and out-of-school factors which, in sum, impinge on the social "environment" in schools. To the extent that we cast the school as just another arena for law, legislation, and the routine judicial processes, we may very well guarantee low performance and counterproductive efforts by the system's major role participants. In the very least, we should encourage systematic examination and straightforward discussion of discipline objectives, problems, and outcomes. (Hazard, 1976, pp. 423-424)

Eleanor Wolf has commented:

Our public schools are virtual display cases for many of the tensions and conflicts within American society, and their internal processes are more visible, their activity considerably more open to inspection and scrutiny than those of other institutions. But, in addition to reflecting societal stresses and inequality, schools generate some problems of

> their own as a consequence of their unique assignment. They alone compel nearly universal participation and are expected to impose a roughly uniform set of tasks upon everyone. There is yet another characteristic of the institution which makes certain kinds of tensions not only inevitable, but appropriate. Schools respond not only to existing values and expectations but also, in varying degrees, to a democratic society's belief-- often weak and uncertain-- that education has a mission of transformation and that schools should support and strengthen respected values violated elsewhere. (Wolf, 1976, p.379)

Thus, after more than a decade of concern with the particular paradoxes one finds in urban education, there are still many areas of criticism. These include the quality of the teaching and administrative staffs-- not only the nature of their initial preparation and continuing development, but the absence of accountability and the growing organizational strength and the exercise of power gained through collective bargaining agreements and political alignments. They include a myriad of issues concerning testing and evaluation-- not only the national decline in test scores, but also the controversy about the use of and the effectiveness of various standardized tests with minority groups. They include the desirability of minimal standard performance testing on a state- or system-wide basis and the question of what the school's obligation is to educating the student. They include a continuing concern with vocational education and the new set of problems and issues acquired with the launching of the "career education" movement. These include questions about the relationships of the schools to other youth-serving institutions and agencies, the use of community resources for teaching and learning, and the utilization of mass media for instruction. They include serious questions about the continuation of present compulsory attendance laws and the creation of alternatives and optional paths to acquiring the credentials society

requires. They include questions of who controls the schools-- and what aspects of the educational process are controlled by whom..They include issues of desegregation-- whether it is still a good idea, how it can be arranged in different settings, and what must transpire after the initial steps of desegregation are taken. They include questions about equitable allocation of financial resources. They include very serious questions about curriculum design, teaching strategies, appropriate instructional materials, and valid assessment procedures. They include questions about multi-cultural and bilingual education. And finally, the issues surrounding questions of equality and inequality in education have been debated more vigorously than ever before. In short, all aspects of education, of schooling, and of the process of socializing children and youth are being reexamined and reanalyzed and proposals for change and reform are being advanced. As William Hazard observed:

> The schooling enterprise, its machinery, its people, and its purposes are under extensive-- though quiet-- review by public bodies and concerned individuals of all persuasions. The massive infusions of federal money into education during the post-Sputnik, pre-Watergate era have declined and we seem to be in a national pause, catching our breath, waiting for new inspirations, new directions, and a new sense of purpose. The reappraisal of social legislation is already underway and may provide some useful insights into future planning of schooling as a social/political instrument.

Although we began in the 1960s, we were not able to create the urban school systems which would attain America's professed goals and values for equal educational opportunity. Our commitment to those goals has been seriously questioned.. If anything, we are probably in deep and probably worsening trouble in our urban school systems. And, we now face a situation whereby urban school systems are beset by increasing budget

constraints which are being coupled with a downplaying of the importance of education. Proposals are being made, for example, to lower the age of compulsory school attendance on the basis that today's youth are more mature than their parents and grandparents and should not be compelled to attend schools, especially since such institutions are viewed as inhumane and irrelevant. Revisionist historians have argued that the explosive growth in school attendance was due solely to the need for satisfying industry's requirements for trained workers, skilled and semi-skilled, and creating the labor force for America's capitalistic ventures. As budgets have been cut in schools and colleges and as proposals for reform have been advanced, educators have deplored these reductions and silently acquiesced without recognizing the significant and larger issue as to whether education and schooling have intrinsic worth and whether individuals are entitled to the fullest development of their potential, regardless of whether the economy is able to absorb them with their higher credentials. This constriction of access to educational opportunities-- to the right to fullest educational development-- impacts on the urban populations particularly. It has been the poor and the otherwise disadvantaged who have benefited most from the open access and equal educational opportunity policies-- if not "most" then certainly significantly. It is they who will suffer most from a policy in which only those who can afford to attend school will do so. It has been argued that the contribution of schools and colleges to upward social mobility is a myth. While the socioeconomic gap has not been closed, individuals and groups have improved socioeconomically through education and training and urban educators should not be deluded by the prevailing rhetoric of revisionist historians and radical critics.

The question of whether or not to lower the age of compulsory attendance to 14 is related to the larger issue although the argument is usually advanced on the basis of eliminating coercion of youth and making it possible for those youth who, in the words of the Kettering Commission report, "damage the learning environment" to be removed from a setting where they impede the learning of their peers. No issue is more important than that of how society views the intrinsic value of and right to education and schooling of its members. Educators must confront this issue head on and not simply concern themselves with the reduction of resources and the downgrading of education as these affect their own jobs and territorial domains.

This, I believe, is the new challenge to urban education and to urban educators-- to reaffirm our traditional commitment to education and the value of education; to develop and implement a concept of urban education which occurs in and beyond the confines of the institution we call "school;" not to be discouraged by our lack of minimal successes in developing adequate-and appropriate education for urban populations but rather to build on the research, theory, and experience of the past fifteen years to create a master plan for urban education which will replace our patchwork of expedients. In the kind of research and theory-building we design and undertake, in our analysis of our problems and our synthesis of findings, we will be facing this new challenge to urban education--the challenge to believe that education is important, that urban populations have a right to equal educational opportunity, and that we can indeed design delivery systems in an urban setting which provide open opportunities for all children, youth, and adults who populate our great urban centers. This is the most serious challenge urban educators and researchers have ever faced.